JANUARY 1958

The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

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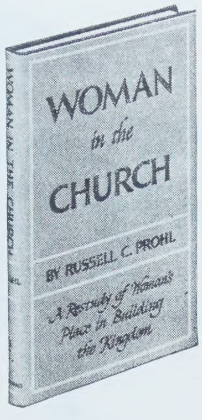
Pages From the Past
By THE EDITORS

Woman Suffrage in the Church
By JOHN H. STEK

Book Reviews and Letters

WOMAN IN THE CHURCH



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THOSE RELIGIOUS NOVELS
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TRADE UNION SCANDALS
Dr. Tony Brouwer, *Assistant Professor of Economics, Calvin College*

PAGES FROM THE PAST
Edited by Dr. George Stob, *Minister of the Prospect Street Christian Reformed Church, Passaic, New Jersey*

WOMAN SUFFRAGE IN THE CHURCH
Rev. John H. Stek, *Minister of the Christian Reformed Church, Raymond, Minnesota*

BOOK REVIEWS

LETTERS

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, excepting August, by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Pu lishing Company, at 231 Jefferson Avenue, S.E.,, Grand Rapids 3, Michiga Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Grand Rapids, Michiga SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 25c per copy; $2.50 one year; $4.00 two yea ADDRESS all subscriptions to Subscription Department, *The Reform Journal*, 231 Jefferson Avenue, S. E., Grand Rapids 3, Michigan. Addre all editorial and advertising communications to Managing Editor and Adv tising Manager respectively.

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Those Religious Novels

by Steve J. Van Der Weele

Alexander Pope once observed that the sanity and morality of England would be vastly ıproved if only there were less paper in the land. e was referring, of course, to the uninspired riting of the Grub Street denizens whose works y side by side with the first rate in the book stalls, ıd jeopardized standards of taste, competence, ıd good sense. A few of us were talking about this oblem the other night when we were sorting books our church library, discarding those no longer rviceable to make room for new ones. This article the result of that discussion. It is about the oks in the section which suffered the heaviest ortality rate in the sorting process, the adult vels, and especially about the so-called religious vels of the type generously represented in all our urch libraries. I shall be insisting that these oks are a form of escape literature and not derving of serious attention. I hope to show that natever purpose they may have served a few nerations, they have had their day and e now hopelessly outmoded. And although I shall using older books for illustrative purposes, I so include in my purview their contemporary counrparts, for such books are still being written, ill being published, still being favorably reviewed. like to think we have matured to the point where e can urge these authors to exercise their talents some other thing, and to persuade the publishers at the market for them is of yesteryear.

Let us examine a few of these books. The date, we discover, can extend anywhere from the rly nineteenth century to the latest publishers' leases. The cover is sometimes already a clue the type: they are often — the older ones, anyway -profusely ornamented with flowers or some other ghly decorative pattern. Some of the publishers, e notice, are publishers of a wide range of books; hers (cf. The Religious Tract Society) print only ligious materials. The illustrations whisk us ck into the Victorian world. The first one we ck up shows a maiden clasping her first love letter her breast. Here is another, with a damsel gazing pon a smiling valley in ecstatic reverie. The ontispiece of this one shows two women trying outstare each other in a haughty fashion indeed. nother depicts real violence in a modern substitute r the duel: two men are engaged in a fist fight, ıe one sprawling in a petunia bed with hat rolling ownhill, the other displaying fierce pride in his prowess. Still another shows an unyielding father confronting a pair of lovers, shouting loud, angry commands not ever to darken his door again. And the scene of yet another is the bedroom of a sick child who is attended by a bearded doctor and an anxious family. (The more recent of these books, we notice, have abandoned the pictures altogether.) The titles of the old ones (cf. *Prudence of the Parsonage, Sunshine Mary*) identify the type immediately. (The new ones have more up-to-date titles, but the materials are essentially the same.) The names of the authors are respectable enough, although why anyone should select the name "Pansy" as a pseudonym is passing strange.

Sir Philip Sidney says that a good tale will keep children from their play and draw the old men from the chimney corners. These novels, on the other hand, must certainly have bored the children and put the men to sleep. They are sentimental, superficial, unreal, and excessively preachy. They stand outside the pale of even a broad definition of art. They lack any real encounter with life, and seem written to do the work that we expect of tracts and sermons. The characters are mere apparitions, not people one expects to meet in the flesh. They are disembodied abstractions with brains the size of a pea, who often serve merely as mouthpieces for the author's endless moralizing. They act naively; and to say this is tantamount to saying in many instances that they act in accordance with the author's conception of virtue. Children, moreover, are expected to act like adults, who alone are the people with wisdom. Animals are exhibited as being in close partnership with man: owls are compared at length with people, dogs are friends to whom one can go when people disappoint, horses whinny encouragement. Bosoms heave, hearts throb, sighs escape, and fainting is the standard response to any event which threatens the even tenor of life.

A very familiar device of these novels makes them already suspect: the stock situation of the incomplete family. Children are left orphans at an early age, and mothers or fathers die inopportunely — usually, one suspects, to inject life into a lagging tale. Sickbed scenes are always good for many pages: they are exploited for all they are worth. The patient lapses in and out of consciousness as the author commands — a technique unparalleled for artificially stimulating suspense. Duty is the key virtue propounded (rather, be it noted, than

Trade Union Scandals

by Tony Brouwer

Corruption in trade unions has attracted considerable public attention in the past four or five months. The strong public reaction, elicited to some extent by an aroused newspaper and television coverage, may not be explainable altogether in terms of the severity of the crimes uncovered. Much of the concern was exhibited by that segment of the press and public to whom the trade union movement was already a power-hungry villain operating in an otherwise relatively harmonious economic environment. The vehemence of the reaction from this group can hardly be regarded as commensurate with the extent of the misdeeds, but can be more properly regarded, perhaps, as an expression of exultation in having its anti-union attitudes so generously vindicated to all. The scope and tenor of the reaction should not, therefore, be looked upon as an accurate measure of the social importance of the affair.

There was, of course, also considerable genuine general concern called up by the corrupt practices of trade union leaders. Significantly and fortunately, some of this concern developed within the trade union movement itself. Even more significant, and perhaps less well-known, is the fact that trade union leaders had become concerned with the problem of corruption long before this time. This is evident from the Constitution of the newly organized combination of the federations, the AFL-CIO; from the AFL-CIO Resolution on Ethical Practices adopted by the AFL-CIO convention in December, 1955; from the Resolution on Procedures adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in June, 1956; and from the AFL-CIO statement regarding cooperation with all appropriate public agencies investigating racketeering, adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in January, 1957. Little reminder is needed that all of these statements and actions preceded the general concern emanating from the investigation of the Teamsters' Union by the McClellan committee this past fall.

Brief mention of the relevant contents of these documents may serve to indicate the extent of trade union efforts to handle this problem from within its own ranks. Article XIII, Section 1 (d) of the AFL-CIO Constitution establishes the Committee on Ethical Practices and vests this committee "with the duty and responsibility to assist the Executive Council in carrying out the Constitutional determination of the Federation to keep the Federation free from any taint of corruption c communism, in accordance with the provision c this Constitution."

The Resolution on Ethical Practices adopted b the Convention in December, 1955, stated in pa that "the American labor movement has eve been quick in its denunciation of public officials wh betray their trust . . . and of businessmen who hav used corrupt methods and bribery to gain their sel ish, acquisitive ends. We must be equally quic to recognize and condemn those instances of racke eering, corruption, and disregard for ethical stan ards when they occur inside our labor movement. The Convention therefore adopted the pledge to giv "its full support, good offices and staff facilities c the AFL-CIO Committee on Ethical Practices to a national and international unions in their effor to carry out and put into practice the constitutiona mandate to keep our organization 'free from an taint of corruption or communism'."

The Resolution on Procedures adopted by th AFL-CIO Executive Council in June of 1956 state in part that "the Committee on Ethical Practice is vested with the authority of the Council to cor duct formal investigations . . . on behalf of th Council, into any situation in which there is reaso to believe an affiliate is dominated, controlled o substantially influenced in the conduct of its affair by any corrupt influence . . . ."

In its January, 1957, statement the AFL-CI Executive Council disclaimed any immunity fro Congressional investigation, praised the work o previously instituted investigating groups, and re affirmed its desire to cooperate with such investiga tions as well as "its own responsibility for keepin its house in order." In this statement the Counci also said, "It is a firm policy of the AFL-CIO tha the highest ethical standards be observed an vigorously followed by all officials of the AFL-CI and its affiliates in the conduct of their offices, in th handling of trade union and welfare funds, and i the administration of trade union affairs. Trad union and welfare funds are the common propert of the members of our unions and must, therefore be administered as a high and sacred trust fo their benefit." In the same statement, the Executiv Council enunciated the controversial "Fifth Amend ment Rule," regarded by critics as unnecessaril "conservative" and even destructive of the civi rights of union officers. The resolution stated tha "it is the policy of the AFL-CIO, however, that if a

ade union official decides to invoke the Fifth mendment for his personal protection and to oid scrutiny by proper legislative committees, law nforcement agencies or other public bodies into leged corruption on his part he has no right to ntinue to hold office in his union." Officials of ie AFL-CIO have stood firm to this day in their pport of this strongly opposed position.

Evidence that these resolutions and policy statements represent more than mere lip-service to moral bligation has been provided by actions taken by ie Executive Council on the advice of the Committee on Ethical Practices. The Council suspended ie large and strong Teamsters Union, with instructions to remedy abuses. It gave the United Textile Workers Union until November 15 to replace its op union officers, and gave the Bakery and onfectionery Workers' Union thirty days to remove corrupt influences in it. The United Textile Workers have already complied with the demands f the Federation. The Teamsters have chosen o defy the Executive Council for the time being. At ie present time, however, James Hoffa has been enied the union presidency by court order instiated by action of rank and file Teamster members. o a considerable degree, it appears that trade nion leadership has both the will and the capaility of handling its own internal problems of orruption and misuse of union funds.

Two other aspects of the problem of corruption n trade unions call for special mention. One nvolves the much publicized existence of "paper ocals," and the establishment of "trusteeships" y the national or international union to carry out isciplinary and corrective proceedings with respect o local affiliates. The other involves the administration of union welfare and pension funds.

"Paper locals" involve the issuance of local union harters where no bona fide local membership xists. With respect to this practice, the Committee n Ethical Practices adopted Code I of its statement of rules. Following investigation, the Committee reported that the vast majority of charters were issued for legitimate trade union purposes. t recognized, however, that some abuses, involving he granting of charters to individuals who used hese charters for their own illicit purposes, had ccurred. It drew up Code I, which reiterates the rovision contained in the vast majority of trade nion constitutions that the issuance of a charter should require application by a minimum number f bona fide employees eligible for membership in he union. Code I also provides that the AFL-CIO and each national and international union "shall take prompt action to insure the forthwith withdrawal of local union charters which have been issued and are now outstanding in violation of hese policies." International unions whose actions are in violation of these policies are subject to suspension or expulsion from the Federation.

The Ethical Practices Committee has also taken cognizance of possible abuses of the practice of establishing trusteeships. It will be recalled that the trusteeship device was utilized particularly by the Teamsters Union to circumvent the democratic selection of delegates to its recent convention in Florida, at which James Hoffa was elected President. The trusteeship, properly employed, is a legitimate administrative instrument designed to ensure democratic, responsible, and honest management of local unions. If, for example control of a local has been seized by Communists or racketeers, the national or international union has the authority to replace these leaders with trustees appointed by the parent body. The trustees are authorized to govern the affairs of the local union until new officers can be elected by the membership in conformity with the local's constitution. In view of the abuses uncovered, however (some trusteeships have continued for as long as fifteen years), the Ethical Practices Committee declares that "such powers should be exercised sparingly and only in accordance with the provisions of the union's constitution, and autonomy should be restored *promptly* upon correction of the abuses requiring trusteeship." Failure to conform to this pronouncement subjects the affiliated unions to charges of "corrupt practices."

In addition to these specific problems, the Ethical Practices Committee has considered abuses in the handling of welfare and pension funds by union officers and trustees. The adoption of several Codes of Ethical Practices pertaining to this subject has resulted. Code II deals with "Health and Welfare Funds"; Code IV is entitled "Investments and Business Interests of Union Officials"; Code V deals with "Financial Practices and Proprietary Activities of Unions"; and Code VI deals with "Union Democratic Processes." The remainder of this article deals only with the question of abuses in the handling of union welfare funds.

Employee benefit programs, in the form of both health-and-welfare and pension-and-retirement programs, have been expanded enormously in the last fifteen years. Pension fund assets alone are reported to have exceeded 26 billion dollars in 1956, and to be "increasing rapidly."[1] The management of these benefit funds by trustees appointed by unions and employers has aroused suspicion of "lack of integrity" and has occasioned several investigations by governmental (both state and federal)

1. Duncan M. McIntyre, "Regulation of Employee Benefit Programs," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (July 1957), p. 554. The material that follows draws heavily from this article by McIntyre, which is recommended reading for anyone desiring an excellent summary of the subject.

committees. The more reliable investigations concluded that (1) only a small percentage of all welfare funds involved dishonesty, but (2) there was corruption and mismanagement of *some* welfare funds. "Union leaders in too many cases have used welfare funds for personal advantage."[2] Some of the investigations probed only into union welfare funds in which some evidence of mismanagement had been indicated. Publicity attending these investigations often created the impression that few well-managed funds existed, whereas, in actuality, no well-managed funds were investigated by these committees.

Many types of corruption and dishonesty were uncovered by the investigations. These ranged from outright embezzlement of trust-fund moneys to "borrowings, with the intention of repayment at some future date," by union leaders appointed as trustees. Sometimes employer trustees signed blank checks, thereby abdicating their responsibilities as trustees. Some of the abuses resulted from competition among insurance agents and brokers "for premium and commission dollars." High commissions were charged by dishonest insurance salesmen who offered tempting "kick-backs" to dishonest union leaders and trustees. An impressively close relationship appears to exist between the presence of large amounts of money and the arrival of unscrupulous money-coveters.

In connection, therefore, with the administration of welfare and pension funds, a strong case for regulation has developed. "Every investigation thus far has concluded that legislative action, to include either more study or the enactment of corrective legislation, is necessary . . .," reports McIntyre.[3] Trade union members, as well as non-union employers covered by benefit programs, need greater protection than they have so far received in the proper management of the moneys which are rightfully theirs.

Considerable difference of opinion exists, of course, with respect to the type and extent of legislation which should be adopted. A wide accepted principle, however, is that legislation, necesary, should be adapted to the specific abuse problem calling forth the legislation. On this bas proposals for subjecting trade unions to the an trust laws because of the mismanagement of w fare funds are as incongruous as would be t requirement of government ownership and contr of business because several corporation officials h embezzled company funds.

The type of legislation most frequently urged deal with the problem of misuse of funds is "feder disclosure legislation." Such legislation would r quire the annual submission of financial reports c operations, including investments, insurance tran actions, commissions and fees, to an administrati agency — presumably the Securities and Exchan Commission. Publication of such reports to ben ficiaries, contributing employers, and perhaps to t public would also be required, on the theory th public awareness represents the strongest deterre to dishonesty. This type of legislation has alread been enacted by the states of New York an Washington. It is often recommended that thes regulations be extended to cover employer-admi istered benefit plans as well as the jointly-admi istered funds now covered.

It is also generally recognized, however, tha legislation alone cannot guarantee the honest pe formance of official duties. The need for effor to raise the plane of moral practices from withi both at the institutional and the individual leve is not obviated by statutory regulations. Formu lation by the AFL-CIO of the Codes of Ethic Practices is, the writer and others believe, such step in the direction of preserving a concern fo moral integrity within the trade union movemen Similar action by companies engaged in the sal of insurance, and by employer groups whose rep resentatives were involved in mismanagemen of funds would be highly desirable. A strict en forcement of these standards by the AFL-CIO i the immediate future will go a long way towar convincing the dubious of the sincerity of its effort to eliminate corruption from trade union ranks

2. *Ibid.*, p. 559.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 559.

. . . The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper furnishes a most powerful incitement to live holily, and especially observe charity and brotherly love toward all. For seeing we have been made members of Jesus Christ, being incorporated into him, and united with him as our head, it is most reasonable that we should become conformable to him in purity and innocence, and especially that we should cultivate charity and concord together as becomes members of the same body. But to understand this advantage properly, we must not suppose that our Lord warns, incites, and inflames our hearts by the external sign merely; for the principal poi is, that he operates in us inwardly by his Holy Spirit, i order to give efficacy to his ordinance, which he has de tined for that purpose, as an instrument by which he wish to do his work in us. Wherefore, inasmuch as the virtue c the Holy Spirit is conjoined with the sacraments when w duly receive them, we have reason to hope they will pro a good mean and aid to make us grow and advance in hol ness of life, and specially in charity.

JOHN CALVIN, *Short Treatise on the Lord's Supp*

Pages from the Past

r the Centennial Year — a collection of contemporary accounts and documents which reflect something of the origins d the developing life of the Christian Reformed Church. Selected and edited by Dr. George Stob

Classis Holland Leaders on the Question of Union

The document which is to be reproduced here should have appeared at an earlier point in this series of "Pages from the Past." A small excerpt from it was given in the September 1956 (p. 16), and October 1956 (p. 15) issue of *The Reformed Journal.*

It is a document prepared by ministers and elders of Classis Holland, who met together on June 10, 1849, to give written formulation to answers that had been given to questions put by Dr. I. N. Wyckoff to a meeting of ministers and elders on June 5, 1849. Dr. Wyckoff, it will be recalled, had been sent to the Holland immigrants who settled in Michigan, to search out and propose the possibilities of union with the Dutch Reformed Church. The document here given sets forth in written form the questions of Dr. Wyckoff and the answers given by the ministers and elders of Classis Holland. It is important, therefore, as reflecting the mind and heart of the leaders of Classis Holland on the whole matter of relations with the Dutch Reformed Church in the East.

This document has been reproduced in the history of Rev. N. H. Dosker, *De Hollandsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Amerika* (pp. 156-162), and also in Henry E. Dosker's biography, *Dr. A. C. Van Raalte* (pp. 321-325). N. H. Dosker indicated at the time that the original was preserved in the archives of Classis Holland of the Dutch Reformed Church. The document is given here as copied (and translated) from N. H. Dosker's book.

The main substance of what was transacted in meeting of ministers, and of some elders of the olland Colony in Michigan, held the 4th of June, 849,[1] in Holland, Ottawa County, Michigan, beause of some questions of investigation proposed y Rev. Wyckoff of Albany, delegated for that urpose by the Synodical Meeting of the Reformed hurches in North America.[2]

First Question. What confession and form of urch government have the churches who have migrated from the Netherlands and settled in lichigan; and what is the status of their developent?

Answer. The churches which have emigrated rom the Netherlands to Michigan are known by their confessional writings, namely: The Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, originally of Guido de Bres; the Five Articles Against the Remonstrants, drawn up at the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19; and the Heidelberg Catechism, or Instruction in the Christian Doctrine in use in the Netherlands Reformed Churches and Schools.

The teaching contained therein concerning God, and the salvation of souls, is precious to them, and they desire to fight for this faith once delivered to the saints. These churches also use the Liturgical Writings of the Netherlands Reformed Churches, and the principles of their form of government are found in the collected church orders which have been put forth by the churches from 1568 to 1619; and these are related to the principles enunciated in the preface which was published by the churches under the cross in connection with the first church order of Wesel, composed in the year 1568; principles promulgated in order to prevent abuse and discourage slander, and in which the necessity of internal order and government in the church is maintained, in order to obviate all improper license and injurious freedom, so that all things might take place decently and in good order, and thought be given to what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; in which, furthermore, they object to the mixing of civil and ecclesiastical government, and also take a stand against one congregation lording it over the other, and against the placing of a yoke on the consciences of men by human laws; declaring that only God's laws are binding for the conscience, so that, whenever anyone transgresses an ecclesiastical law, not seeking thereby to create confusion or give offense, and having observed the inner piety of the first table [of the Moral Law], he has not sinned in trespassing upon an ecclesiastical law.

As concerns the state of development, there are present here six separate organized congregations; in addition to that it has become necessary in some of the surrounding places, such as Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, etc., to search for men qualified for the office of elders, in order that they might keep watch over the members who live there. These congregations are served by four ministers; the fifth minister is expected to arrive here from the Nether-

1. The date of June 4 seems to be incorrect. The meeting as apparently held on June 5, 1849. In his report (cf. *he Reformed Journal,* Sept. 1956, p. 13), Dr. Wyckoff oted that he arrived in the colony on "Thursday evening, une 1st, 1849." He consented to wait for the assembling f the ministerial brethren on Monday following. Since une 1, 1849, did fall on Thursday, the meeting which Vyckoff reported as having been held the Monday following as June 5, 1849.

2. Actually, Dr. Wyckoff had been sent by the Board f Domestic Missions, and made his report to that Board.

lands within the next four weeks. The sixth congregation has not yet succeeded in getting a minister for themselves. These various consistories hold their Classical meeting two times a year; and in addition the ministers meet four times a year for mutual stimulus.

Second Question. Do those churches desire to unite with the Holland Reformed Churches in the United States of North America?

Answer. We have a very strong feeling of need for the communion of saints. We hate the sectarian spirit. On the ground of God's Word, and being fully persuaded, we say Amen to: "The eye cannot say to the hand, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of you," and we consider it an abomination to say: "I am holier than you." For that reason we seek the closest possible union with God's Church, wherever she is manifested on earth, if only she knows and confesses the way of salvation. But how much more do we feel ourselves one with those churches which have the same confession of faith, the same liturgy and form of government that we have, and who desire openly to defend God's truth over against the lie. We have never looked upon ourselves as other than a part of the Holland Reformed Church, for that reason long to live in fellowship with those churches, and wish to send our delegates to their church assemblies.

Third Question. Are these congregations in need?

Answer. We could answer this question in various ways. We have come out of oppression and vilification, indeed, out of many bonds, and therefore we feel wholly determined and also prepared to courageously undertake the very meaningful penetration into the wilderness. What is involved in such a venture can be best understood by an American himself. It is a wonder, in our eyes, that God has helped us through for nearly two years already, without help from the outside; and we feel ourselves moved and deeply humbled by reason of God's mighty sustenance and the altogether joyous prospects for the future. However, any one who knows and understands what it is to move to the West, indeed, what it is to come with a few thousand people, untrained and without experience for this work — mostly poor people, and those more well-to-do supplied with limited means — into the completest wilderness, where every means for the maintenance of home, church, and civil government must first be found, will readily appreciate that many, very many tender concerns of Church, School, etc., suffer not a little in the settlements here and in the places surrounding them. We do not want to hide our many needs; to the contrary, it surprises us, and grieves us, that these tender co cerns of the Church of God, which fled the Fathe land because of many kinds of oppression and bonc and sought refuge in the wilderness of the Wes have escaped the care of those old-Holland congr gations of Jesus Christ for more than two yea notwithstanding the fact that they landed on yo coasts, travelled through your cities, and we known as followers of the same banner of fait However, with hearty thanks, and with a thank giving that makes the tears well up in our eye and which moves us to kiss God's solicitous han we acknowledge, and will always acknowledge, t friendly hand of brotherhood which was stretch out to us by certain of the children of God in t anxious state of our homelessness, who were n ashamed of us, standing on your docks intermingl with the thousands of emigrants, but who refresh our souls and gave us rest. No, we shall not forg them but think of them, and our children after u and their reward will be from that God who car for the stranger, and from that Savior who w reward and eternally remember the smallest servi shown to the least of His own.

The experience here recorded convinces us th there is laid upon the shoulders of the peaceful and fully established churches of the East a solem duty to support the weaker members of the bo of Christ, who, through God's dispensation ha been spread as a salt among the emigrants, so th they do not sink under too great a burden, and lo the precious heritage of the Church of God. Indee we should have to accuse ourselves of slumberi and unfaithfulness, if we did not urgently besee our brothers of the churches in the East to set the hearts upon this extensive calling, and to thru themselves with all the means at hand into th flood of peoples who sink away in the West, and w -- since they are for the most part estranged fro God and His truth, or, full of superstition and unb lief, without the Sabbath day and instruction, i cline to Barbarism — will become a curse inste of a blessing for the States. Meanwhile, we a sensitive to the extended hand of brotherhood; v esteem it highly. A sharing in our lot is for us this alien land a refreshing thing, which we ha the more learned to treasure after having anguish in our own native land through a time of revili and oppression; this love is fruitful in thanksgivi to God. For the rest we commend ourselves wi our needs to your intercession. Our communion with the Father and the Son, through the Ho Spirit, so that our fellowship may promote mutu spiritual prosperity and well-being!

Your loving brothers in Christ.

C. Van der Meulen	A. C. Van Raalte
M. A. Ijpma	J. Van der Werp
S. Bolks	A. Glerum
J. G. Van Hees	J. Kolvoort
J. Van de Luister	H. W. Dam
J. Hoogesteeger	K. J. De Vree
A. Borgers	E. Zijlstra
M. Westraate	G. de Broot
J. Kruit	S. Kaslander
A. Van Bree	H. O. Yntema
J. Steketee, Cz.	H. Lankheet
	G. J. Wolterink

Editor's note: The copy found in Henry Dosker's biography of Van Raalte gives the date of the above document as June 10, 1849, and places the names of the signers in a different order, and has instead of the name of J. Kolvoort (in N. H. Dosker's copy) the name of Js. Kaboost. Also, though the text is the same, the Doskers differ in the paragraphing. I have endeavored to check these copies against the original, which according to N. H. Dosker (writing in 1888) was preserved in the Archives of Classis Holland. I have been graciously assisted in this search by Rev. Henry A. Mouw, Stated Clerk of Classis Holland, and Rev. Jean Vis, but the original document has not been found.

Woman Suffrage in the Church*

by John H. Stek

Article 155 of the Acts of Synod, 1957, of the hristian Reformed Church reads:

> Synod decides that women may participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote subject to the rules that govern the participation of men. The question as to whether and when the women members of any church shall be invited to participate in the activities of its congregational meetings is left to the judgment of each consistory.

This decision was taken on the basis of the conusions of the synodical study committee which reorted to synod on this matter. There are, however, rious doubts in my mind that the conclusions are n adequate basis for this decision. What follows an attempt to subject these conclusions to a critial analysis in an effort to re-evaluate them.

Conclusion I

> I. The Word of God teaches the spiritual equality of man and woman as imagebearers of God and as heirs of the grace of life and as participants in the office of believers.

To this conclusion one can hardly object as long s the "office of believers" be understood not so much s a station of dignity and privilege as a qualificaion for and call to service. These two aspects of he office of believers must always be kept in view nd must always be held in proper tension. The act that all who are in Christ share in this office s a wonderful Scriptural doctrine and a solid Refornation principle. But this doctrine in itself does ot supply the whole answer to the question. In vhat sphere or spheres are the several believers to exercise this office? The whole answer can be had only after one has also inquired searchingly of the Scriptures whether or not there is laid upon any category of believers any restrictions regarding the sphere or spheres of life in which it is to exercise the commonly held office of believers. In pursuance of this inquiry it will be proper to go on to conclusion II.

Conclusion II

> II. The Word of God teaches that there is a difference between man and woman, involving the headship of man, which is rooted in creation and which is not abrogated by redemption.

With this conclusion, too, there can be hearty agreement.

It is to be noted that the purview of this conclusion is obviously broader than the sphere of the home, and seems even to be broader than the relationship between husband and wife. The apparent implications of this conclusion are: (1) A wife is to be in subjection to her husband in the home. (2) A wife is to be in subjection to her husband in all the manifold social relationships which may be established outside of the home. (3) Women are to be in subjection to men in all their social relationships. A woman may not assume leadership over a man who is not her husband any more than she may assume leadership over her own husband.

Here we meet with a definite Scriptural restriction upon members of a certain category of believers regarding the exercise of the office of believers. Women believers are always to exercise their office of believers in subjection to men believers with whom they hold the office of believers in common. What does this mean in terms of concrete situations? Conclusion III begins to spell this out.

*We are happy to present this article, which takes a osition other than that expressed by one of the Editors n earlier issues of *The Reformed Journal*. Dr. George Stob vill continue the discussion of woman suffrage in the February issue of the *Journal*, and touch on some of the oints raised by the Rev. Stek.

Conclusion III

> III. In accordance with this principle rooted in creation, and brought to bear on the life of the church by the apostle Paul, women should not be accorded a position of leadership in the church. They should hold no ruling or teaching office in the church.

This also is a sound conclusion. It states simply that the restriction discovered in Scripture and stated in conclusion II means concretely that women believers "should hold no ruling or teaching office in the church." This it states in application of Paul's directive that "women should not be accorded a position of leadership in the church." The question whether Paul's directive has broader implications will be pursued later.

Conclusion IV

> IV. In the congregational meeting the government of the church rests with the consistory. Participation in such meetings by the membership of the church is by virtue of the office of believer.

This fourth conclusion does not address itself to the relationship of women believers to men believers in the life of the church. It speaks of congregational meetings. Two distinct and rather remotely related matters pertaining to congregational meetings are thrown together under a single enumeration. The first statement tells us that "in the congregational meeting the government of the church rests with the consistory." This intends to locate the seat of authority and responsibility in the congregational meeting. The second statement informs us that "participation in such meetings by the membership of the church is by virtue of the office of believers." This addresses itself to the matter of qualification for participation in congregational meetings.

Obviously these two points must be discussed separately. The latter of the two is self-evident. Participation in any part of the church's life and ministry is "by virtue of the office of believers." There is, however, a further question: do all those who have been made recipients of the office of believers by that very token possess the right to exercise that office in the sphere of the congregational meeting? This question will have to wait for the discussion of conclusion V.

The former of the two is an attempt to indicate very briefly the place of the congregational meeting in the government of the local church. In formulating conclusions brevity is usually a virtue. Here it has become a vice. There is here a most significant and surprising omission. It is stated that "in the congregational meeting the government of the church rests with the consistory." This statement standing alone harmonizes with three different conceptions of the role of the congregational meeting: (1) It obviously harmonizes with the idea that the congregational meeting has no authority wh ever but simply affords the consistory with an opp tunity to make a report to the members of t congregation and/or discuss certain plans w them. (2) It harmonizes with the idea that t congregational meeting possesses advisory auth ity, in which case the consistory retains t prerogative of final decisions. (3) It can be h monized with the idea that congregational meetin possess real authority in those matters which a submitted to it for decision. The fourth conclusi strangely omits stating which of these three p sible positions the study committee adopts. Co sequently conclusion IVa is more confusing th enlightening. The omission here is the more su prising in view of the fact that the committee its acknowledged that the character of the authori of the congregational meeting has large significan for the question of women's suffrage in congr gational meetings, and in view of the fact that t committee was explicitly charged by synod to stu this matter and bring its conclusions to bear upo the problem.

Now it is apparent from the committee's repo that it recognizes a measure of real, be it subordi ate, authority residing in the congregational mee ing. It points out Scriptural material and quot from the creeds, the church order, and the litu gical forms to substantiate its opinion that "co gregational meetings are more than advisory, th in them the congregation *helps* to govern t church, and exercises a *measure of authorit* (italics theirs). Admittedly the authority of t congregational meeting is "limited" so that eve "in the congregational meeting the government the church rests with the consistory." Neverth less, the congregational meeting possesses a ce tain measure of authority, and "helps" in t government of the congregation. Moreover, whe the committee states in IVb that "participation such meetings by the membership of the churc is by virtue of the office of believer" it assum that the members of the congregation are, in t congregational meeting, exercising an office wit out which they would have no right there. A office here surely implies some kind of authority.

This opinion of the committee is no doubt cor rect. It is probably not wrong to state the cas even so strongly as to say that the decisions of th congregational meeting are binding, except whe subsequent events make them impossible of execu tion or when subsequently obtained informatio indicates that the execution of the decision woul be improper. It is, of course, the consistory tha determines the agenda for the congregationa meetings. And in preparing the agenda the con sistory must act responsibly. It may not present th congregational meeting with alternatives one c

hich is not acceptable to the consistory itself. At he very least it may not present the congregational eeting with any alternatives one of which the consistory would feel morally bound to reject. But then, aving submitted for congregational decision lternatives either of which the consistory can nscientiously — though not necessarily gladly - execute, surely the consistory is morally bound abide by that decision.

But if it is true that the congregational meeting ears a "measure of authority" by which it "helps" govern the congregation this fact ought to have een stated in conclusion IV in qualification of the rst statement that "in the congregational meeting he government of the church rests with the consistory." As it stands conclusion IV leaves the npression that the congregational meeting exerses no ruling authority. That impression makes sier the decision that "women may participate congregational meetings with the right to vote bject to the rules that govern the participation men." But if it be true, as the committee has ally decided, but failed to state in its conclusions, at the congregational meeting exercises "a measre of authority," then to permit women to parcipate in congregational meetings "subject to the les that govern the participation of men" is to rmit women to "help" rule the church through e congregational meeting *on a par with men.* oes this involve on the part of women believers e assumption of leadership over men believers? o this matter conclusion V is addressed.

Conclusion V

V. The participation of women in voting at congregational meetings as an exercise of the office of believers is not a matter of assuming leadership over men.

If conclusion IV has a strange omission, conusion V is a strange insertion. It is enumerated mong the *conclusions* of the committee resulting om its study. Yet it states an opinion which is either demonstrated in the committee's argument nor logically implied in the previously stated nclusions. It is simply an assertion. Furthermore, it is an unsupported assertion concerning a ucial element in the whole discussion. If there as any matter which the committee should have xamined it is the question whether or not the parcipation of women in voting at congregational eetings is a matter of assuming leadership over en. Instead of discussing this matter, however, e committee simply issued a dictum declaring that "is not."

The logic of the committee seems to be — though e cannot be sure — that since women are exuded from the ruling and teaching offices, and nce even in the congregational meeting the govrnment of the church rests with the consistory, therefore "participation of women in voting at congregational meetings . . . is not a matter of assuming leadership over men."

If this is the reasoning of the committee it is a *non sequitur.* All that the argument logically proves is that the participation of women in voting at congregational meetings is not a matter of assuming authority over the consistory, and therefore is not a matter of assuming leadership over *those men who by virtue of their offices are endowed with a special authority.*

But that is not the point at issue. The proper question is rather whether or not the participation of women in voting at congregational meetings involves any violation of the principle laid down in conclusion II — not in the relationship of women to those men who happen to be entrusted with ecclesiastical office, but in the relationship of women to *the ordinary male members of the congregation.*

Conclusion II states that "there is a difference between man and woman, involving the headship of man, which is rooted in creation and which is not abrogated by redemption." It does not seem that this principle is being honored when women are permitted to "participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote subject to the rules that govern the participation of men."

It must be remembered that the right (or privilege) to "participate in congregational meetings with the right to vote subject to the rules that govern the participation of men" involves more than just the right (or privilege) to express one's mind silently on a ballot. It involves also the right (or privilege) to discuss and to debate on the floor of the congregational meeting matters which are submitted for congregational decision. And such discussion and debate surely has as its purpose to instruct or persuade, and thus to lead. But if Paul could see in the discarding of the veil a violation of the principle stated in conclusion II, and if he could understand as one of its implications that women are to "keep silence in the churches," that, in fact, it is "shameful for a woman to speak in the church," but that women are to "learn in quietness with all subjection," then surely to permit women to participate in congregational meetings "subject to the rules that govern the participation of men" is a violation also.

It ought to be noticed here that the only practical conclusion to which the committee came as a result of its study of Paul's writings is that women "should hold no ruling or teaching office." This conclusion, of course, is obvious, but it overlooks the fact that in the three pertinent passages Paul is probably not addressing himself to the question at all whether or not women should hold a ruling or teaching office, I Timothy 2:12 being the only possible exception. Paul, it would seem, is concerned in these passages

primarily with the proper relationship of the women believers to the ordinary men believers in the day-by-day life of the congregation. He therefore says much more than that women "should hold no ruling or teaching office." He says that in all the life of the church women believers are to be in subjection to men believers. This is no denial of the truth that women share equally with men in the office of believers. It is but the consistent application of the principle stated in conclusion II, and says only that women are always to exercise the office of believers in subjection to men.

There is yet a further consideration which is not to be overlooked in the evaluation of conclusion V. Not only does the participation of women in voting at congregational meetings permit women to exercise leadership over men when they exercise their right (or privilege) to discuss and debate. It permits them to exercise such leadership over men also in the ballot whenever the majority of those casting ballots are women — a circumstance always possible and in some congregations probable — or whenever, in a close vote, a woman casts the deciding ballot.

It would seem that conclusion V, which is simply asserted by the committee without any supporting argument even though it deals with the most crucial point at issue, can neither bear scrutiny in the light of Scripture nor be supported by logical implications drawn from the previously stated conclusions. Before the church decided to depart from an age-old position which it had always believed to be dictated by the Word it should have insisted upon sounder argumentation than that which the committee has presented.

I have up to this point criticized the conclusions on two counts. Conclusion IV, I said, omitted to say what the committee had in fact concluded, namely, that the congregational meetings bear a "measure of authority" by which they "help" to govern the congregation. I said also that conclusion V is a bare assertion which is not supported by the committee's argument nor defensible in the light of Scripture. There remains to examine conclusion VI.

Conclusion VI

> VI. Church politically speaking there is no essential difference between the right of approbation, which women do already exercise, and participation in congregational meetings with the right to vote.

Here again we have a bald assertion on the part of the committee rather than a conclusion. Nowhere has the committee made an attempt to demonstrate this point. It is true that the committee said under I (D) of its report, "In the exercise of the right of approbation, we also have an act of *helping* [italics theirs] to govern the church, and this right has always been accorded to women in the Reformed churches." But this doesn't prove what the co clusion states, namely, "Church politically spea ing there is *no essential difference* between the rig of approbation . . . and participation in congreg tional meetings . . ." [italics mine]. Again the co mittee calls attention to the fact that the most r cent synodical committee of the Gereformeer Kerken which studied this matter concluded th "voting by members of the congregation in the ele tion of office-bearers cannot on good grounds be he to be such a form of exercise of power, in distin tion from the right of approbation, that siste may not be admitted to it." A little later we a informed that this committee of our sister chur differed on this point with a prior committee the same church. We are told, "The committee 1930 holds that approbation lies in the sphere discipline (*tucht*) while the committee of 19 argues that there is no Biblical warrant for t distinction which the committee of 1930 made But these references to the conclusions of anoth study committee can hardly be said to be *proo* for conclusion VI. When the whole report h been read we are still left with a bare assertio which is fortified indeed by the conclusion of t committee of 1952 of the Gereformeerde Kerke but which is unproved for all that.

Had the committee sought to prove conclusi VI it would, I think, have been hard pressed. N doubt the right of approbation is properly accor ed to women believers. No doubt, too, this rig is theirs by virtue of the fact that they participa in the office of believers. Moreover, the commi tee of 1952 of the Gereformeerde Kerken was ve likely correct when it distinguished between t right of approbation and the exercise of disciplin This is not, however, the whole of the matter.

It must be remembered that the basic point issue is not whether or not women believers posse the office of believers as truly and as fully as men believers. This is a fact acknowledged by a The point at issue is the *extent of the area* in whi women are to exercise the office of believers in t life of the church. That there is such an area obvious from Scripture. Some women were c laborers with Paul in the gospel (Phil. 4:3, Ro 16:1-4, 6, 12, 15); others, such as Dorcas, we noted for their works of charity in the chur (Acts 9:36); others again let their houses to the u of the church, for example, Mary the mother John Mark (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14), a Priscilla (Rom. 16:5); and still others "prophesie (Acts 21:9). Furthermore, Paul on two occasio charged women with specific tasks. In I Timot 5:16 he commands the woman believer to look aft the widows in her family so that the church m not be burdened. And in Titus 2 he admonish aged women to be "teachers of that which is goo

the young women. There is therefore a place and calling for women to exercise the office of believers in the church.

But the area of their exercise of the office of believers is restricted. It is restricted by the basic principle that the woman believer is always to be in subjection to the man believer (I Cor. 11:3-15; 14:34-37; I Tim. 2:11, 12). This is the fundamental principle which Paul seeks always to guard. It is the one reason why Paul lays down the rule that the woman is to "keep silence in the churches" and that she is to "learn in quietness with all subjection," not being permitted "to teach." In the home she exercises the office of believers in subjection to her husband and in the church she exercises the office of believers in subjection to the man.

Now this principle has a relevance for the congregational meeting which it does not have for the right of approbation. This the committee and synod have overlooked. It was, however, pointed out on the floor of synod.

In the congregational meeting the church is called upon to act as a body. Participation in the congregational meeting involves the participant in a public and communal act. He acts in concert and in conference with the body of those who together with him possess the office of believers. *In so far,* at least, the congregational meeting is of the same nature as the public meetings of the church concerning which Paul was speaking in I Corinthians 11:3-15, 14:34-37, and I Timothy 2:11, 12. And it is just in the circumstance which these two situations have in common that the matter of the relationship between women believers and men believers has significance. Under such circumstances, says Paul, let the woman be in subjection. Let her be silent.

The distinction between male and female does not have the same significance, if any at all, for the exercise of the right of approbation. The right of approbation is exercised by the members of the church in their capacity as church members indeed. But it is exercised by the members of the church individually and in private. Consequently for the exercise of the right of approbation the difference between male and female has no relevance. It must be remembered that the right of approbation is primarily a right to voice disapprobation. And this registering of disapprobation is done individually and in the privacy of the consistory room. Moreover, it consists of stating the reasons why the individual member voicing disapproval cannot approve of the action of the consistory. These reasons are then weighed by the consistory and its previous action is reviewed. The right of approbation is therefore one which is exercised individually and in private, and consists principally in the communication of certain information to the consistory. The matter of the relationship between the woman believer and the man believer does not enter into the picture. Here it is simply a matter of the inherent right of every member of the church irrespective of his sex or position, to obtain a hearing with the office-bearers of the church on matters which pertain to the well-being of the church or of any of its members.

Conclusion VI which appears as an unsupported assertion in the committee's report is therefore hardly defensible, the conclusion of the 1952 committee of the Gereformeerde Kerken to the contrary notwithstanding.

Right or Privilege?

One further matter needs attention. There is a question whether the committee's proposals, as adopted by synod, involve the official recognition of a *right* which women believers possess by virtue of their participation in the office of believers, or the extension of a *privilege* to women believers, which extension is thought to be permissible in view of the fact that women believers do participate in the office of believers. The distinction is significant. If it is a *right* that is being recognized at long last then the church ought to introduce the new practice in the spirit of repentance and with all reasonable haste. If it is only a privilege which is being extended then it is by its very nature an optional matter, and, moreover, the privilege may be later withdrawn if abused. Furthermore, if women have the *right* to participation in the congregational meeting by virtue of their participation in the office of believers, then they also have the *duty.* Their right and duty is precisely the same as that of men believers. The difference between male and female has ceased to be relevant. Right and duty rests simply upon participation in the office of believers. On the other hand if it is a *privilege* which is being extended there is not the involvement in duty. Moreover, if it is a privilege the relevance of the difference between male and female is retained, but with remarkable results. Observe! The male believer participates in the congregational meeting by virtue of his possession of the office of believers, and this participation is one of *right* involving *duty.* The female believer participates in the congregational meeting by virtue of her possession of the office of believers, and this participation is one of *privilege* involving *no* duty. The inequality is obvious. Moreover, it is inequality *with the woman believer in the position of advantage.* She is extended a privilege which places her on a par with man in the congregational meeting but she is bound by no obligation. She has the privilege of exercising the authority of the office of believers in the congregational meeting but she is not held by the obligations of that authority.

What, then, do the committee's proposals involve? Rather, what has the church done? Has she recognized a *right* or extended a *privilege?* The argument of the committee suggests that women believers possess a *right* which the church ought to recognize. The committee argues as follows:

(1) "The Word of God teaches the spiritual equality of man and woman . . . as participants in the office of believers":

(2) "Participation in such meetings (congregational) by the membership of the church is by virtue of the office of believers":

(3) "The participation of women in voting at congregational meetings as an exercise of the office of believers is not a matter of assuming leadership over men" and therefore does not violate the principle of the headship of man;

therefore the participation of women in congregational meetings is consistent with the teachings of Scripture. This is an argument which proves *right* rather than *privilege*. It places the woman on a par with the man in the congregational meeting. She participates on the same basis, the office of believers, and there is nothing which restricts her exercise of that office in the circumstance which obtains in the congregational meeting. There is nothing *in the argumentation of the committee* which warrants a distinction between the conditions under which men and women are to participate in the congregational meeting, men under the condition of right and duty, women under the condition of privilege and option.

So much for the committee's argument. But what of the committee's proposals? And what of synod's decision? Since the decision of synod incorporates the proposals of both the majority and the minority of the committee we may address ourselves to its formulation. The resolution, adopted, reads, "Synod decides that women may p ticipate in congregational meetings with the ri to vote subject to the rules that govern the part pation of men. The question as to whether and w the women members of any church shall be invi to participate in the activities of its congregatio meetings is left to the judgment of each consistor

This resolution obviously speaks of *privilege* a recognizes neither right nor duty. Women "*m* participate in congregational meetings" (ital mine). Local consistories may decide "*whether* a *when* the women members of any church shall *invited* to participate" (italics mine). The p posals of the committee and the decision of Syn smuggles in a distinction between the conditic under which men and women believers respectiv are to participate in congregational meetings. H this distinction passed the customs of logic is ha to see. Surely logic must have been looking t other way when this distinction was slipped into t resolutions.

It is true that the resolution speaks of a "right vote" but it obviously does not intend this to understood to be an inherent right. The "right vote" here is precisely the *privilege* which is bei extended, or, rather, which a consistory may tend if it so decides.

* * * *

The above analysis ought to be enough to sh that the decision of the 1957 synod regardi women's suffrage in the church is one that stan without adequate foundation. Either the chur must find a more solid basis for this action or e she must acknowledge her error and correct it order to bring her life back into conformity wi the Word of God.

. . . The substance of the sacraments is the Lord Jesus, and the efficacy of them the graces and blessings which we have by his means. Now the efficacy of the Supper is to confirm to us the reconciliation which we have with God through our Saviour's death and passion; the washing of our souls which we have in the shedding of his blood; the righteousness which we have in his obedience; in short, the hope of salvation which we have in all that he has done for us. It is necessary, then, that the substance should be conjoined with these, otherwise nothing would be firm or certain. Hence we conclude that two things are presented to us in the Supper, namely, Jesus Christ as the source and substance of all good; and, secondly, the fruit and efficacy of h death and passion. This is implied in the wor which were used. For after commanding us to e his body and drink his blood, he adds that his bo was delivered for us, and his blood shed for the r mission of our sins. Hereby he intimates, first, th we ought not simply to communicate in his body a blood, without any other consideration, but in ord to receive the fruit derived to us from his death a passion; secondly, that we can attain the enjoyme of such fruit only by participating in his body a blood, from which it is derived.

—JOHN CALVIN, *Short Treatise the Lord's Supp*

BOOK REVIEWS

GHTY ACTS OF GOD by Harry R. er. 62 pp. Jos, Nigeria: The Niger ess, 1957.

viewed by CARL KROMMINGA, sociate Professor of Practical Theol-y, Calvin Seminary.

This little book gives us the sub-nce of Dr. Harry R. Boer's ad-sses delivered at the annual Chris-n Leadership Course held at the adiri Training Centre. The author presses the purpose of these talks the *Foreword*, where he writes,

. . . The purpose of this course is to bring together Christian students in Northern Nigeria for fellowship and to contribute to the better understanding of the faith they profess and of its meaning for their life.

It is with this purpose in mind hat the following talks were prepared. They endeavor to give a short but systematic exposition of the Apostles' Creed. In so brief a compass completeness of statement s obviously impossible. No more has been attempted than to set forth the main points of the faith we hold with indications of how this faith strengthens and enriches the life of the believer.

t does not require much reading in book to see the complexness of the ation in which Boer's original rers find themselves today. In his atment of the first article of the ed, Boer is obviously speaking inst the background of the cyclical w of nature characteristic of old anism. But Boer is also aware of fact that these young, educated Ni-ian Christians are acquainted with stern neo-paganism. Boer sets th the Christian demand for the us and believing study of the cos-s in these words,

The Christian cannot seriously nquire into any area of knowledge without detecting everywhere the and of divine power and wisdom. Let us in our study of biology, as-ronomy, psychology, geography, mathematics or any of the other branches of knowledge never become so lost in the admiration of the structure and design of *things* hat we fail to ascribe reverence and honor to their Maker in whose eternal counsel they were planned and by whose might they were given form and life. We have been given the earth not simply to enjoy and to admire it, but that in our enjoyment and admiration of it we might enjoy and admire the Creator. (p. 11)

This is but one instance of Boer's constant awareness of the constitution of the audience he is addressing and of the difficulties which face them as they seek to pursue Western learning.

Another fine feature of this book is its abundant use of Scripture. One can sense from the placement of apt quotations from the Bible that Boer quoted Scripture with a deep respect for its majestic and final authority.

Perhaps no occasion calls for so clear a statement of magnificent and ineffable truth as that which Boer faced in addressing these African Christian students. Boer has achieved simplicity in these addresses, but he has achieved it without sacrificing the profound excellence and glory of the truth of God's Word. While the lectures do, of course, presuppose a real knowledge of the story of salvation from Genesis to Revelation, the form in which they are cast shows that Boer used to the maximum degree that general knowledge which his hearers possessed. These lectures state the basic truths of the faith plainly, without theological jargon. This makes them refreshing reading even for us who have been initiated to the fraternity of those who can sling big Latin phrases at the modern Goliath of popular unbelief but who seem never to be able to hit his forehead.

The scope of this work precludes adequate treatment of every doctrinal question or problem suggested. There are, however, instances in which the extent of treatment given seems to require further clarification. For example, Boer emphasizes that sin and evil have no *natural* place in God's good creation, and that they will some day wholly cease to be. In this connection he quotes Revelation 21:2-4. But the inevitable question of the continued existence of wicked men and angels in a place of torment is not dealt with at all, even though the claim that the New Creation is wholly good *seems* to be challenged by the Biblical teaching of eternal suffering in hell. This is not to criticize the statement as it stands, since it is true in context. Nor should this criticism be interpreted to mean that Boer slights the doctrine of the judgment and eternal punishment. To the contrary, these truths receive significant attention in other parts of the book.

It is understandable that Boer deals with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit along the lines set down in his masterful dissertation, *Pentecost and the Missionary Witness of the Church.* But it would seem that the hearers in view could also have benefited from a fuller exposition of the Holy Spirit's work in the sanctification of the Church. Of course, witness has much to do with sanctification, and Boer does suggest interesting perspectives on sanctification when he relates the call to Christian self-effacement to the "humility of the Spirit." But a more direct discussion of the fruits of the Spirit *at this point* in the talks would have been in order. Sanctification is surely given its due in the rest of the book, however.

This reviewer also felt that the second coming of Christ could have received larger treatment in connection with the confession, "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." Again, this criticism should not be taken to mean that this doctrine is slighted — it is presented in a challenging and personal manner at the end of the last lecture.

Mighty Acts of God — the theme of this title governs every page of the book. Throughout the whole series of lectures the hearers had to do with the stupendous acts of the Triune God. Throughout the talks Boer kept the hearers alert not only to the doctrine of Scripture but also to the historical progression of its revelation. This contributes not a little to the power of these addresses.

A set of questions on each chapter is appended to the book. The key to Boer's intention can be secured by a consideration of these questions. No doubt all of us would be better able to state the great truth which we confess more powerfully and effectively to the world in which we live if we could give Boer's answers to his own questions with his clarity and vigor.

THE DESERT FATHERS. Translations from the Latin with an Introduction by Helen Waddell. 209 pp. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press (Ann Arbor Books), 1957, $1.25.

Reviewed by ROBERT T. OTTEN, Assistant Professor of Classical Languages, Calvin College.

It is interesting to speculate on the reasons why the Press of a state university should publish a book of this type. The very title, *The Desert Fathers,* surely recalls nothing very familiar to the public for which this book is marketed. Those who can supply some background to the title, will, for the most part, remember only the excesses of these ascetics whose

lives and thoughts are here recorded, and will, if they do read the book, bring to their reading the spirit of a Gibbon or Lecky, whom Miss Waddell quotes on page five of her Introduction. Furthermore, the temperament revealed in this book is Eastern, not Western, static, not dynamic. What are we Occidentals to do with people who practice the sterile contemplation of the Oriental mystics? There is still another barrier, that of language: these *Vitae* were written only in Greek or Latin, not in any familiar, modern, civilized tongue. And but for Miss Waddell, the memory of this "ascetic epidemic" (see page five of the Introduction) would mercifully have perished with the creatures who thought their hermitic and austere mode of living the "good life." This book has, however, the value of an archaeological find, a relic of the past, in that it (1) represents a way of life some people once thought good, and (2) preserves the linguistic skill of a twentieth-century scholar who thought it worth the time to record for others the aberrancies of religious fanatics. But that sicknesses of their tortured minds should be uncovered yet again — and that in the form of a "paper back" — this is unforgivably indecent. For whatever reason the book is being republished, it must be placed in the next time-capsule, for the mere fact of its reappearance in Midwest America will be at least one unmanageable fact for the sociologists of the Future.

But there is much to commend the book to those whose interests are still humane. There is the exquisite prose and sensitive scholarship of Miss Waddell exhibited in both her translations and Introduction, the latter of which is the only proper review for this book. There are in this book examples of saint-hood in both its stumbling beginnings and its confident progress, of humanity and selflessness. But the spirit of this monasticism is fierce and uncompromising in its rigor, inhuman and extravagant in its demands. This is the literature of the holy life, and it is for us to read; but to understand it, one must have fled to the vast and awful silence of the desert.

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THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION *by Paul Tillich;* trans. by H. Richard Niebuhr. Meridian Books, 1956. $1.25.

Reviewed by DAVID H. FREEMAN, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, University of Rhode Island.

The growing interest in and significance of Paul Tillich is attested to by the re-publication in an inexpensive English edition of one of his earlier German works, *Die religiöse Lag Gegenwart* (*The Religious Situation*).

According to Tillich, the spheres of science, philosophy, art, politics, and the church — in short, all of culture and civilization — are the expression of a basic religious attitude toward what is the ultimate source of meaning. At its very core every cultural form, every cultural creation, expresses "religion," man's relation to the eternal, so that an analysis of the religious situation is necessarily an analysis of culture.

Tillich's evaluation of civilization in terms of its religious structure presupposes that the forms of culture are meaningful to the degree that they express an unconditioned depth, a reality known solely by faith. The essential meaning of a civilization, its religious meaning, is supposedly found when we discover the way in which cultural forms are related to what Tillich calls the "eternal."

Within the historical process there is, on the one hand, a tendency to point beyond to the eternal, to transcend the conditioned, and, on the other, there is the "demonic" tendency to elevate the conditioned, and to regard it as self-sufficient.

In every area of contemporary life Tillich detects a revolt against faith in man's efforts and ability to control himself and the world.

Tillich believes that in the present religious situation, our own Western Society is caught in the throes of rebellion against the "spirit of capitalist society," the spirit of self-sufficiency. From the study of the civilization of the first quarter of the twentieth century Tillich concludes that we are moving out of a period where every cultural form is regarded as self-sufficient. Battles still remain to be fought in every area, but the spirit of self-sufficiency has suffered defeats.

Mathematical natural science, for example, remains unshaken in its method, but the theory of relativity has revealed the infinity of existence more clearly. And in philosophy it is now possible for our time to develop a new metaphysics via "the intuition of unconditioned in the symbols of conditioned." Similar disclosures meaning are to be found in art, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, and literature; and in the pol cal and ethical spheres. And althou the most important religious mo ments are outside of religion in narrow sense, i.e., the sphere wh explicitly expresses in concrete symb the reference of time to eternity, Till does not neglect the latter.

Religion in the narrow sense is direct antithesis to capitalist society, the basic principle of the latter is self-sufficiency of the finite. But ort doxy, in all its forms, is internally ste in its opposition to self-sufficient fo of culture, and liberal religion surr ders to "capitalist" culture. In action there has arisen occult and dividual mysticism, as well as escha logical movements, such as the Comr nist hope of an ideal community. A within the churches as such the sa inner antagonism between religion capitalist society has appeared.

The churches are free to reject spirit of capitalism, or to surrender to or to overcome it on the basis of own assumptions. Catholicism has b inclined to reject capitalist culture,

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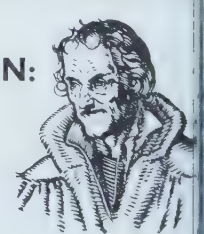

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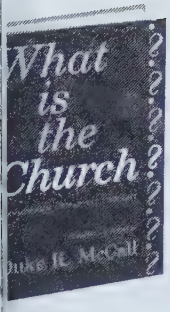

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so doing it has itself fallen victim the spirit of self-sufficient finitude. l at the time Tillich first published *Religious Situation*, thirty years , Protestantism vacillated between test and compromise with the spirit capitalism. But even then Protes- theology had begun to search for w way, and changes made it possible peak again of a divine revelation at eeper level than every concrete reve- on, and it no longer became neces- to chose between liberalism and odoxy. "The eternal was again rehended as the ground of meaning the abyss of reality."

hirty years ago the attitude of ef-ful realism appeared to Tillich to r a perspective in terms of which spirit of self-sufficiency of finitude ld be overcome. Belief-ful realism a total attitude toward reality in ch faith transcends every conceiv- e and experienceable reality and ism rejects every transcending re- y. The correlation of these two terms, h and reality, is the key to Tillich's ation to the religious problem, for y signify an awareness of the eter- the unconditioned, without imag- ng a supra-natural world above the ural one.

Since Tillich wrote *The Religious Situation* he has sought to break through the spirit of self-sufficiency in the field of theology, and his own theological writings seek to provide the way out of "capitalist society" by substituting a neodialectical theology for orthodox and liberal theology, a neodialectical theology which paves the way for a theonomous culture, a culture which, in its creations, expresses an ultimate concern and reveals the holy, its unconditional and ultimate depth, by implying that every finite reality is rooted in its created ground.

The fulfillment of Tillich's labor is found in his *Systematic Theology*, where it becomes evident that the term *God* for Tillich is synonymous with the ontological structure which constitutes the ground of being of culture, and which can best be approached in Christian symbols. The only non-symbolic statement that can be spoken of God is that He is being itself. " 'Personal' God does not mean that God is a person but that he is the ground of everything personal."

Tillich's analysis of the religious situation is a challenge to all forms of orthodoxy. Much is to be learned from Tillich, not in a positive sense, but negatively. His own theology cannot be called Christian in any classic sense of the term, and yet his indictment of the spirit of capitalist society serves as a warning to all orthodox Christians who have failed to relate their cultural creations to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who refuse to express themselves in their own culture.

Orthodox Christians will do well to read Tillich, for he is not only aware of the changing climate of the twentieth century but he himself is a part of that change. Orthodox Christians who live in the past and employ the vocabulary of the past, will do well to translate what they have to say, the truth of which is unchanging, into forms which are intelligible to the present. For whatever our criticism of Tillich may be, he is in fact being heard by many, at a time when classic Protestant orthodoxy, at least in the United States, appears to be without a spokesman.

And yet the "religious situation" viewed from the standpoint of orthodoxy is not wholly without some healthy signs of life. Certain trends are hopeful. The introduction of numerous Dutch translations of theology and philosophy by the Baker, Erdmans, and Presbyterian and Reformed publishing companies has made a part of the neo-Calvinism of the Netherlands available to the English reader. And the recent periodical, *Christianity Today*, is valiantly endeavoring to overcome the excesses of fundamentalism and to give conservative Protestantism a voice. But the spirit of separatism, provincialism, and isolation surrounding orthodoxy has not yet crumbled. And the question remains: Is there anyone in Zion able to meet Tillich's challenge?

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

Sirs:

The editorial in the September issue of *The Reformed Journal* on "The State of Theology in the Church" is a most disappointing piece of work. The author posits as the great fault of the Christian Reformed Church the acceptance of the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty as being the central doctrine in our theology. Surely brother Daane is not ignorant of the fact that every truly Reformed Church and every truly Reformed theologian accepts without question Divine Sovereignty as the central and basic doctrine of all of God's revelation to man. It is the starting point for all truly Reformed thinking; it's the guide in all Reformed thinking; it is the conclusion to which all things in the whole of God's revelation moves: "For of him, through him, and unto him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:36) If this be a fault in Christian Reformed theology, it is a fault of all Reformed theology. On that account I am astonished that a minister claiming to be Reformed charges this as a fault to his own denomination. Yet as one reads the editorial, one obtains the impression that all the "ills" in the Christian Reformed Church in the first century of its history are to be attributed to the acceptance of Divine Sovereignty as being central to all Reformed theology. If the reasoning be correct, then indeed without a moment's delay we ought at once to shift the emphasis in our theology and thinking. But that Reformed theology in general, and the Christian Reformed Church in particular, is in error for having accepted Divine Sovereignty as central is merely a gratuitous assumption on the part of the editor Daane. It is accepted without

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any proof. To make people who are truly Reformed in thinking seriously consider what Dr. Daane assumes, it is necessary to adduce proof from the Scripture that Reformed thinking has been in error since the days of Calvin. But there is not a scintilla of proof from the Bible offered for the assumption that Reformed thinking has committed one chief error, and the Christian Reformed Church has accepted the error as truth and has therefore been misled for an entire century.

I dislike to think that there is conscious disloyalty on the part of any one of our ministers to the Reformed faith. But one raises an eyebrow when one reads that such a beloved and diligently Reformed scholar as our late professor L. Berkhof is put in the shade by one of his own disciples, who at the same time lauds as brilliant lights in the theological world such unreformed and liberal and (to my mind) subtle enemies of God's Word as Barth, Brunner, Tillich and Chafer. When our late friend is belittled and our most dangerous enemies are praised, one wonders whether one who writes thus is any longer Reformed. If this is the type of leadership we have developed at the close of our first century of life as a denomination, the turn of the century looks like a turning from light to darkness. This kind of leadership is not a native, but an imported product. If this is the type of leadership our second century starts with, we have seen our heyday as a truly Reformed people and our light is turning to darkness. Unless a change comes we'll become as colorless as some very excellent Reformed churches of the past have become. Think of what happened at Princeton and its denomination within our own lifetime. Why should we expect to fare better in our own denomination if this is what a few of our leaders are thinking and writing.

I have wondered if the footnote (2) on page 7 is possibly not just as revelatory of the author's thinking as the article itself. It is true, he puts it in a question form, but nevertheless suggests that it might be a good thing for Reformed theologians to begin with man's responsibility instead of Divine Sovereignty. But I ask: If Divine Sovereignty is not central, how can you have responsibility on the part of man? To whom would man then be responsible? Is not the whole thrust of the neo-orthodox movement, "man the center of all things"? That is why these men sit in judgment even on the very Word of God. What authority has the Bible if God, who gave it, is not sovereign, and his book not infallible? Human responsibility becomes a nonentity, and man becomes a law unto himself, which is the lie of paradise revived.

Indeed the editorial is thought-provoking, if readers are not gullible, and dare to think for themselves. As one muses on the current of thought running through the entire article, one begins to ponder whether the drift from the Reformed moorings is not already underway — not only in our own Christian Reformed Church but also in our sister denominations. Allow me to mention a few samples of things that indicate this drift.

The new stand on Divorce and Remarriage is one of these things. We have not given proof from the infallible Word of the sovereign God that our traditional position regarding Divorce and Remarriage was erroneous. We sought advice from sister denominations through the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, but anyone could predict in advance that the committee for study would advise relaxing our stand, for the churches consulted had already in their stand departed from the Word when they allowed another ground beside adultery. We listened in this matter more to man's t than God's. Our new stand is to be more merciful, but we ough have remembered that while God sured David of pardon, he neverth told him that the sword would no part from his house forever. does not create the problems follow upon an unbiblical divorce remarriage. The sinner does that. think more of the sinner than of in our new stand, which is m saying that in our decision to the stand, and in our practice, we become more man-centered than centered.

Does not this shift of empl from God and His Word to man his opinions appear also in the trend among our Reformed thin in regard to theistic evolution? propagated by Dr. Lever, and supported by Dr. Ridderbos in *Is There a Conflict Between Ge 1 and Natural Science?* There drift here also in our own denom tion. It does our hearts good not everybody is ready to say, "W derful." I am glad that our Dr. E Monsma, also a scientist, said Lever had not proven his point. other words, there are still some demand evidence, and evidence does not exclude the infallible W of the Sovereign God as data in f ing a judgment. But too many afraid they will not be accred as good scientists, and therefore sent to scientific theories and then to fit the Scripture to the new the by an unnatural explanation. Bu this not a shift in our thinking f God to man as being central?

Let me mention only one more evidence of shift of emphasis. Daane and now Boer in his re booklet, *That My House May Be F* suggests that lodge members o not to be excluded from our chur as members. But if we are goin fill the Lord's House with that kin guests, what will the Lord say w He sees them without the wed gown of righteousness and holi the sovereign God supplies thr His Son by the Holy Spirit? But lodge member denies the holy Tr and also salvation by grace alone. these brethren say: Take them Isn't this too the shift of empl from God to man as the center?

One might find more such em ses, but these suffice to show a trend, which is most unwholes Are these things possibly an evid that some of our leaders are tryin shift the emphasis from the tr

)d as sovereign to man as the cen- of all things, and still trying to be formed? But there is really only e way of continuing to be Reformed id becoming more and more Re- rmed, and that is by insisting that)d's sovereignty be stressed as the ntral truth of all our thinking. What it if the tendency is away from is viewpoint in our man-centered)rld? Let us have the courage of nviction and dare to stand for God d His sovereign will like Daniel and s friends did. May God give us aders in the second century of our e as a denomination who stand like e rock of Gibraltar amid the storm d keep the Reformed banner float- g, Soli Deo Gloria!

C. R. VEENSTRA.

REPLY

Rev. Veenstra's concern, if some- iat emotional, is obviously sincere. therefore, take none of it ill. Since relates to serious matters, I think well to make a few comments.

Rev. Veenstra seems to think we ve but two alternatives. We must her accept a highly abstract con-)t of divine sovereignty, make it the ndamental principle of our theol- y, and conform all other truths to or, accept a man-centered theology. for my part, think there is another d better alternative.

May I begin by commenting on e second alternative. I did not sug- st, as he broadly implies, that "hu- an responsibility" ought to become e central doctrine of our theology. ither, I made the observation that Reformed theologian had ever ade human responsibility central, d I did so in order to show that, as matter of fact, Reformed theology *not* a "balanced" theology, that is, t a theology constructed on the two ually central, but to us apparently ntradictory, doctrines of divine sov- eignty and human responsibility. I not believe the history of Reformed eology supports the view that Re- rmed theology is a "balanced" the-)gy. I *do* believe that few ideas ve kept us closer to the brink of rminianism than this notion of a alanced theology." I also believe at this notion of a "balanced theol- y" has come into its present vogue order to counterbalance the all too stract concept of divine sovereignty, rticularly as it has come to its more treme and consistent applications in e theologies of Hoeksema and Van l. Does not this account for the t that our best and most frequently urged argument against the theological method of Hoeksema is that "he goes too far," and emphasizes certain truths "too much"? And does this not also account for the fact that Hoeksema's best and most frequently used argument against our theology is that we are Arminianistic and as such deny the sovereignty of God? No, I do not believe for one moment that "human responsibility" ought to be the fundamental principle of our theology; I do not even believe that it ought to be regarded as a second (counter-balancing) fundamental principle.

To return to Rev. Veenstra's first alternative — Rev. Veenstra insists that God is sovereign. I insist upon this too. But simply saying so is not enough. If simply insisting that God is sovereign were enough, then the Mohammedans would be of all men the most Reformed. Much depends on how sovereignty is defined. And much also depends on the usage made of the sovereignty of God in our theological method. Rev. Veenstra remarks that I surely am not ignorant that every Reformed theologian regards God's sovereignty as the basic doctrine. To this I shall only reply that in my days in Calvin Seminary, the late Professor S. Volbeda quite explicitly denied that divine sovereignty was the fundamental principal of Calvinism — and he was not referring to a merely abstract concept of sovereignty.

The mere insistence that God is sovereign does not guarantee the Reformed character of one's thought. Professor Berkouwer has shown this clearly in his criticism of Barth's conception of the sovereign, triumphant grace of God. We too can learn this lesson from our own theological history. Both Hoeksema and Van Til emphasize the sovereignty of God, but in both it has led to a number of positions — which I have indicated in my centennial article — which I, and I think Rev. Veenstra, would hardly regard as Biblical.

I believe that in the Bible God's sovereignty is defined in relation to grace and not apart from it. In Biblical thought God is sovereign not in the sense of naked power, so that He becomes the Cause, and as such the Explanation of anything and everything (for example of sin, and of reprobation defined wholly apart from sin), but in the sense that He is absolutely free to grant or withhold grace, to have mercy upon whom He wills, and to harden whom He wills. It is this free right of God to grant or not to grant grace, which *comports with the nature of grace* as that to which God is not compelled, and as that to which man has no claim. In short, in Biblical thought the sovereignty of God is defined in terms of His freedom to be gracious, rather than in terms of a naked power which becomes a principle of Causality whereby God *as such* becomes the Ultimate Cause, and as such a Cause the Explanation of sin.

The thesis of my article was that during our one hundred years we have too often operated with an abstract doctrine of sovereignty, that is, a doctrine of sovereignty defined apart from grace. This led to the many unfortunate conclusions I described in my article. I did not claim a 20-20 theological vision. Perhaps there is a better explanation which accounts for the unfortunate conclusions. If there is, may it be presented, for the unfortunate conclusions at which our theological processes have arrived are — or ought to be — a matter of deep concern for those who love the Reformed Faith and are concerned about the condition of Reformed Churches.

There is one significant fact which suggests that my thesis may not be altogether wrong. My thesis was, I repeat, that we have often defined sovereignty abstractly, that is, apart from grace, and have then proceeded to define grace (and all other doctrines)by means of this abstract concept of sovereignty. I would ask serious consideration of the following: Both Hoeksema and Van Til have strongly stressed the sovereignty of God. But it was precisely Hoeksema's idea of sovereignty which led him to deny common grace and the general well-meant offer of the gospel, and to insist that God loves the elect only because they are *righteous* in Christ and — what is the other side of the coin — that God hates sinners. And it was Van Til's idea of sovereignty which led him to the assertions that God does not love sinners as they are,

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that is, as sinners, and that grace (common) by its very nature is calculated to make men crucify the Son of God afresh. In both theologies, common grace is not only threatened or denied, but the very nature of grace (special and common) is seriously imperiled. Hoeksema has been very explicit in his insistence that common grace is a denial of God's sovereignty and a surrender to a man-centered Arminianism. Van Til has sought to escape this criticism of Hoeksema by making his concept of grace as abstract and naked as his concept of sovereignty, and presenting grace as something which by its very nature is equally calculated to bring the elect to heaven and the reprobate to hell.

In any event, Rev. Veenstra will have to admit that Hoeksema's insistence on God's sovereignty has not made him Reformed, at least not by Christian Reformed standards.

Rev. Veenstra deems it regrettable that a disciple should differ from his master. This is true — but only in the world of the Bible where master is spelled with a capital *M*. In our world the disciple not only has a right to differ, but even has a calling to go beyond his masters — if he can. This is in the finest tradition of the Reformation. To forbid the right, or deny the calling, is to succumb to the very kind of traditionalism which the Reformation disowned, the kind which I think to detect in Rev. Veenstra's comments on our Church's position on divorce and remarriage. I think the Reformers taught us to be bound by God's Word, but not to be bound by any and every position which cannot be *disproved* by God's Word. To what wiles and subtleties of men would not the humble and unlearned people of God be subjected, being untaught in the "logic of the negative," if they were to be bound in conscience and life by what they could not disprove by Scripture. In any case, it seems strange that Rev. Veenstra can himself disagree with an official position of his Church, and yet raise an eyebrow and at least think in terms of a possible conscious disloyalty because I do not accept everything that one of the late and honored members of our Church taught.

Regarding the comments of Rev. Veenstra on Natural Science and Theistic Evolution, I prefer to remain silent, being anything but an expert in these matters. Though it sometimes is not recognized even by churchmen, it is better, I think, to maintain a public silence on matters on which one has no special competence, especially where unmeditated utterance can cause unnecessary public offense against the gospel and the Christian Church.

Though the most effective weapon available to those who disagree is to suggest the opposite, I have no special interest in enrolling Masons in Christian Reformed churches. I have only urged that the Biblical nature of the Church and of preaching is such that if the Lord through a given church's preaching converts men of any kind, and the church itself judges them to be converts, that church will have to accept them, and then go on from there. Though many have disagreed, and some have distorted what I have in fact said, none to this date has faced the theological position I posited and disagreed with it. Disagreement has only attached itself to the consequences. Until it becomes clear that my theology of the Church and of the nature of preaching is in error, I can only trust that it will not be taken ill that I live by such theological lights as I possess.

JAMES DAANE

SIRS:

In the November number of *The Reformed Journal* Dr. George Stob contributed an article entitled, *Some Thoughts on Woman Suffrage*. In this article the author discusses the ruling which the Christian Reformed Synod of last summer adopted regarding woman suffrage at our congregational meetings.

I feel persuaded to ask for a bit of space in your magazine in order to state some of my reactions to Dr. Stob's article. I am convinced that the author was laboring under certain misapprehensions when he wrote as he did. Some of these misapprehensions are less serious than others. I shall call attention only to those which in my opinion are more serious.

Dr. Stob, in the first place, holds that the synodical ruling in question was taken without biblical grounds. We read: "We should hope that in any matter of basic principle in the life of the church there would be careful concern to search out and set forth the teaching of Scripture."

All of us, I am sure, agree with this statement. But the fact of the matter is that this was done in this instance. If Dr. Stob will consult the *Agenda* and *Acts* of our Synods of recent years he will agree with my contention. And an examination of the Study Committee's report to the Synod of 1957 — see *Acts*, 1957, 308-15 — will support this claim specifically.

The Study Committee took care note of every passage in the Bi which had bearing on the questi before it. We especially exegeted three classical passages in the N Testament which are of great signi cance for the question at hand. I fer to I Corinthians 11:3-15; I C inthians 14:34-37; and I Timo 2:11, 12. The summary of our fi ings regarding these passages is fou in our report to Synod of last summ

Then on the basis of our exegeti labors and of all our findings the Co mittee formulated five conclusions garding the place of the woman in church. These are also found in report mentioned above. And then Committee concludes its report follows:

> *"Recommendation*
>
> In the light of the forego study and conclusions, your Co mittee recommends that Synod clare that:
>
> Women may participate in c gregational meetings with the ri to vote subject to the rules t govern the participation of me

Bearing this material and proced in mind it simply is not true that S od adopted the ruling in quest without a searching out and sett forth of the scriptural teachings this matter.

Personally, as a member of Study Committee, I would have p ferred the following statement: "C sistories which desire to invite women members of their churches participate in the activities at cong gational meetings have the approval the Synod of 1957." In a postscript our report I suggested this versi Synod however was satisfied with committee's version, which I thou was open to misinterpretation. Bu would nevertheless maintain that one remembers that this ruling adopted in the light of the interpre tions and the conclusions of the Stu Committee, he will have to concl that when Synod said, "Women m participate in congregational meeti . . . ." it meant to say: Consisto which invite their women members congregational meetings do not viol the Word of God. Synod did mean to say: We hereby extend women the right to participate in congregational meetings of their spective churches.

The context of the recommendati rules this interpretation out. A

nod simply would not have the ght to make a ruling of this kind. is every consistory's prerogative to vite to its congregational meetings ose whom it feels should be in- ed. Synod cannot ignore the con- tories here, and decide for the con- tories.

Furthermore, the very fact that nod also decided that the question to "whether and when the women embers of any church shall be in- ed to participate in the activities congregational meetings is left to judgment of each consistory" arly shows that in the first half of ruling Synod did not mean to give ch one of our women members ac- ss to and voting rights at our con- gational meetings. That, to be re, would have been an unwarranted, reformed overruling of our con- tories, and a violation of the tonomy of the local churches.

Consequently, rightly read, the rul- of Synod cannot and should not called contradictory.

Dr. Stob would of course be right he should contend that the ruling Synod as such is not bolstered by ble texts or biblical exegesis. That to say, Synod did not incorporate ch materials in the ruling.

But this fact is in full harmony h the committee's suggestion. The mmittee purposefully left all sup- rting materials out of the suggested ling.

In the past our Synods have often gued at length, not the proposition ich was being suggested and with ich at least the majority often reed, but certain grounds attached. ten this procedure has stymied our rk at Synod. We wanted to avoid s danger, by arguing our case in report, convincing Synod of its rrectness, and then suggesting a mple church governmental ruling.

Now when it comes to a creedal ex- ession, a doctrinal statement, this ocedure should not be followed. en Synod must speak officially as what the Word of God teaches and at it does not teach. For which ason also our Creeds correctly con- n much material directly taken m the Word, and even much official erpretation of scriptural passages. t regarding church governmental lings this is not the case. See, for ample, the Church Order. For none its articles and rulings does the urch Order furnish biblical exe- gesis or direct scriptural support. Our fathers never felt this to be necessary. They avoided it, and correctly so. Our Synods should never begin to exegete certain scriptural passages and then proclaim such interpretations to be the official interpretation of the churches — and therefore binding for all the churches — except this is necessary. For creedal statements this is necessary; regarding doctrinal controversies which disturb the churches this may be necessary. For procedural matters, for questions of church polity this is not necessary, and often even inadvisable.

It may also be added that the procedure which Synod of 1957 followed when it adopted this simple ruling is the procedure which the early Reformed Synods before and after Dort followed, and which the Synods of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland still follow. An examination of the *Acts* of these Synods will reveal the correctness of this as certain.

Much, Mr. Editor, might also be said as to Dr. Stob's fears and surmisals regarding our attitude toward women and their God-ordained place in life and in His Church. Here also there is much misapprehension as I see it. But my letter is already lengthier than I wanted it to be, so I shall let that rest.

In conclusion I would like to say that all of us who reflect and write on our Synods would do well to remember that the quotations which appear in *The Banner* — reproducing certain discussions at Synod — are bound to be incomplete and often incorrect. We should never judge a man or his utterances at Synod by these reports *in and by themselves*. If we do I am sure that we will do the party concerned an injustice, almost every time and without fail.

Fraternally yours,
MARTIN MONSMA

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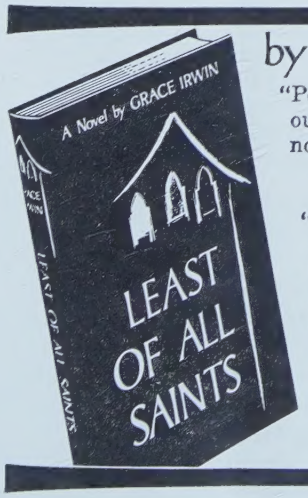
REPLY

1. I fear Prof. Monsma does not quote me correctly. I said: "The Synod of 1957, while making a judgment about the woman in the life and work of the church, offers no Scriptural ground." That is indisputable, as may be seen from an examination of Article 155, *Acts* 1957. There was a Study Committee Report, of course, with conclusions. But these conclusions were not adopted by Synod. One might assume that Synod was moved in whole, in part, or not at all by these conclusions. There is no way of knowing. The only thing we know is that more people voted for the Synodical decision than against it.

2. Prof. Monsma himself supports my contention. He is at pains to make clear that at the committee's suggestion no grounds were attached to the suggested ruling, because grounds are "often argued at length," and "often this procedure has stymied our work at Synod." Thus, Prof. Monsma not only underscores my assertion, but exhibits a serious weakness in Synod's procedure. The proper "work" of Synod is not merely to make majority decisions, but such decisions as are based on Scripture. Is it not strange



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to say, as Prof. Monsma does, that Synod's work is "stymied" when Scriptural grounds are debated? The grounds are precisely the all-important matter — because no decision is any better or more binding than the Scriptural grounds on which it rests. To say: eliminate the grounds, and come to a "simple church governmental ruling," is to suggest that one might govern the church by majority vote rather than by Scriptural authority.

3. It is not correct, as Prof. Monsma seems to imply, that to provide Scriptural grounds for a Synodical ruling is "to exegete certain Scripture passages and then proclaim such interpretations to be the official interpretation of the churches — and therefore binding for all the churches." The Scriptural ground is an expression of Synod's judgment concerning the basis for the ruling. The Scriptural ground is always subject to discussion and debate, and whenever it can be proved an invalid ground, the ruling resting upon it can be rescinded.

4. There are several crucial elements of Scripture teaching which even the Study Committee didn't "search out and set forth." For example, what kind of "right" does a woman believer have to participate in congregational meetings? Prof. Monsma makes of it only a "privilege," the exercise of which is wholly dependent on consistorial will. It would be hard to support this contention from Scripture, or even from the conclusions of the Study Committee. Further, does the right of the woman to participate also involve the duty? If not, why not? Again, does the right of the woman to participate permit only the casting of the vote, or may she speak? And, to question the validity of the second part of Synod's decision, which was adopted at Prof. Monsma's suggestion: Does any Consistory, taking into account the Scripture teaching about the position of the woman in the membership of the congregation, have the right to exclude women from the congregational meeting? What do the Scriptures say?

5. I agree with Prof. Monsma that "we should never judge a man or his utterances at Synod" by *Banner* reports "*in and by themselves.*" I have scrupulously tried to observe this condition. If there is a specific instance in which the "*Banner*" reports which I quoted have misrepresented anybody, I should be happy to be corrected.

GEORGE STOB

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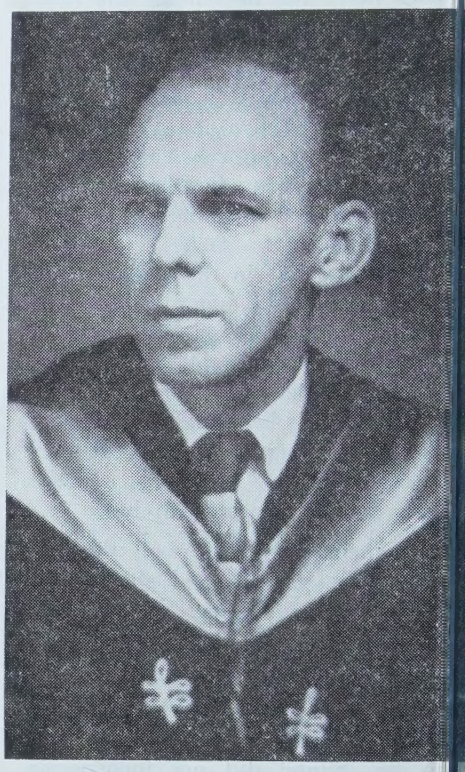

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